

# OPEN AND SHUT?

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

## The Open Access Interviews: Deputy Director General of the Bureau of Policy at the National Natural Science Foundation of China

On May 15, 2014 both the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) announced new open access policies.



Prof. Yonghe Zheng

Both funders' policies require that all papers resulting from funded projects must be deposited in online repositories and made publicly accessible within 12 months of publication — a model pioneered by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2008, when it introduced its influential [Public Access Policy](#).

As a result of the new Chinese policies there will be a significant increase in the number of research papers freely available, not least because it comes at a

time when the number of papers published by Chinese researchers is growing rapidly. In reporting news of the policies, *Nature* indicated that Chinese research output has grown from 48,000 articles in 2003, or 5.6% of the global total, to more than 186,000 articles in 2012, or 13.9%.

Of the latter figure, more than 100,000 papers, or 55.2% of Chinese output, involved some funding from the NSFC. Below I publish a Q&A conducted by email with Prof. Yonghe Zheng, Deputy Director General of the Bureau of Policy, NSFC.

### The interview begins

**Q:** NSFC recently announced an open access policy. As I understand it, this policy will require researchers to deposit the final, peer-reviewed manuscripts of research articles funded by NSFC into the organisation's repository and made open access 12 months after publication. The policy also says that earlier open access should be provided where the publisher allows. Presumably researchers will be able to choose to publish their papers either in subscription journals (and then self-archive them as [green OA](#)) or in open access journals ([gold OA](#))

**A:** Yes, the researchers can choose to publish their papers in subscription journals or OA journals as they like.

**Q:** Does NSFC have a view on which form of OA is preferable and for what percentage of the papers that will be deposited under the policy will be gold and what percentage green? And does it expect this percentage to change over time? Is green OA seen as a transition arrangement before moving to a fully gold OA environment for instance?

**A:** NSFC does not have any policy presumption on the percentage of green OA and gold OA papers, and we do not prefer researchers to publish papers in green or gold OA journals. The percentage of green/gold OA papers is naturally produced right now, and we anticipate this percentage will change over time. I guess gold OA is likely to take a much more important role in a decade or so.

**Q:** You say that the percentage of green and gold is naturally produced now. Presumably this means that some researchers are already embracing OA. If

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8h



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so, can you give me some estimate of the percentage of NSFC papers that are being made OA today, and what percentage of that percentage is green OA and what percentage is gold OA?

A: We know from experience that many researchers we fund are paying APCs to publish OA articles today, and many have deposited their AAM (author accepted manuscript) in the institutional repository of their organisation, like the one at CAS. But at the moment we do not have any statistics or reasonable estimates on the percentages of NSFC papers made OA. We would certainly like to develop that capacity as we implement our OA policy.

Q: Does NSFC allow researchers to use money from their grants to pay for gold OA? If so, are there any rules on how much they are able to spend on publishing a paper?

A: NSFC allows researchers to use the funding to pay for gold OA papers as they did before to pay journals to publish general papers under the funding plan.

Q: Does NSFC have a separate gold OA fund that researchers can apply to in order to pay for gold OA? If not, do you expect that such a fund will be set up in the future?

A: We have no specific fund for gold OA, but I am aware that other funding agencies in the world have these kind of funds. We need to study how to promote OA development in a sustainable way. Personally, I do not think it would be easy in NSFC to set up this kind of fund. Certainly we would need to consider a number of questions – fairness, for example, and the budgetary implications etc.

Q: Does NSFC have any bulk publishing/ membership agreements in place with scholarly publishers with regard to publishing papers gold OA (e.g. similar to the one CAS signed with BMC in 2009)? If so, can you give me the details? If not, does it expect to enter into similar agreements in the future?

A: Right now, we still have no agreement with regard to publishing OA papers with publishers. Some publishers are very interested in cooperating with us to promote OA. We need to do more evaluation before we design our policy plan.

Q: I believe that the policy has immediate effect. However, I do not think that the NSFC yet has a repository. What should researchers do in the meantime, and when do you expect the NSFC repository to become available?

A: We need to develop a repository in NSFC and I hope it will be ready before the end of 2016. Until then researchers will need to provide deposit information in their project reports, but they will not need to do any additional work before the repository is ready.

Q: You say that researchers need to provide deposit information in their project reports. Can I just check: This means that researchers will not need to deposit their papers until the repository is ready in 2016? If they do need to deposit now, where can they deposit their papers today?

A: As I say, NSFC is working to have its repository ready before the end of 2016 so that researchers can deposit their funded papers. In the meantime, we encourage them to deposit their papers in their respective institutional repositories. By the way, researchers are asked to provide the basic information of their publications in their annual report, and this information (including the abstracts of papers) is available on the Information Sharing Serving Website of NSFC [here](#).

Q: Is NSFC building its repository itself, or will it outsource the work? If the latter, who do you expect to build the NSFC repository?

A: The NSFC IT centre will be in charge of calling for a bid for the development of the repository.

Posted by Richard Poynder at 14:02



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## Open Access in China: Time is of the Essence

The two Chinese OA Mandates (**NSFC** and **CAS**) came fast (2014), but the possibility of complying with them is coming slowly (no repository till 2016).

In addition, articles need not be deposited until 12 months after publication.

In most fields, especially the fast-moving sciences, the benefits of Open Access (maximised uptake, usage, impact and progress) are biggest and most important within the first year of publication. That is the growth tip if research. *Access losses in the first year are never fully caught up in later years.* The iron needs to be struck when it is hot.

There are two very simple steps that China can take to minimise the needless loss of research uptake, usage and impact loss because of lost time:

(1) China should up the repositories immediately, using the available free softwares such as **EPrints** and **DSpace**. It requires only a server and a few hours worth of set-up time and the repository is ready for deposits. There is no reason whatsoever to wait two years. ;It would also be sensible to have **distributed local repositories** — at universities and research institutions — rather than just one central one. Each institution can easily set up its own repository. All repositories are interoperable and if and when desired, their contents can be automatically exported to or harvested by central repositories.

(2) Although an OA embargo of 12 months is allowed, China should mandate that deposit itself must be **immediate** (immediately upon acceptance for publication). Access to the deposit can be set as close access during the embargo if desired, but **EPrints** and **DSpace** repositories have the **"Request-Copy" Button** for closed-access deposits so that individual users can request and authors can provide an individual copy for research purposes with one click each. The repository automatically emails the copy if the author clicks Yes.

June 18, 2014 10:52 am



**Richard Poynder said...**

What I am wondering is whether, in order to comply with green OA mandates/policies, many researchers may in practice opt for gold OA. So while most recent OA policies have been characterised by OA advocates as green mandates, might these mandates end up behaving more like gold mandates?

While it would clearly not be the most cost-effective way of providing OA, I wonder if many researchers might not prefer it, both because it is easier for them, and because it provides immediate OA.

But is there any data available to guide us on the likelihood of this? Earlier this year I asked the NIH what percentage of the papers deposited in PubMed Central in order to comply with the NIH public access policy were published in subscription journals and then self-archived, and what percentage were published in OA or hybrid journals.

NIH responded, "PMC does not categorize journals or papers by their payment model (author pay, subscription with page charges, hybrid, etc.) or their license (e.g. CC-BY, etc.)."

June 18, 2014 12:13 pm

June 18, 2014 12:17 pm



**Stevan Harnad said...**

## Important (and very welcome) Addendum and Correction from Eloy Rodrigues (June 19):

*The CAS mandate is for immediate deposit:*

*CAS requires its researchers and graduate students to deposit an electronic version of the final, peer-reviewed manuscripts of their research articles, resulted from any public funded scientific research projects, submitted and consequently published in academic journals after the issuing of this policy, into the open access repositories of their respective institutes at the time the article is published, to be made*

One of a series exploring the current state of Open Access ( OA ), the Q&A below is with Robin Osborne , Professor of Ancient History a...



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founded a new company called Knowledge Unlatched ( KU ). The goal, she explained in 2013, was ...

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publicly available within 12 months of the official data of publication.

And CAS already has a network of IRs. Xiaolin Zhang the CAS Library Director has been a very active OA and IR advocate.

June 19, 2014 3:31 pm 



**Richard Poynder said...**

Correct. The above interview was focussed on the OA policy of NSFC rather than the policy at CAS. The NSFC policy can be read [here](#).

You will see the policy states, "From the day this policy statement is issued, research papers generated from projects fully or partially funded by NSFC, when submitted and published in academic journals, the authors of the papers should deposit the final manuscripts, which have been peer reviewed and accepted by the journals, to the NSFC repository with an embargo period of no more than 12 months. Earlier open access should be provided if the publisher allows. If the paper is published in an open access journal or the publisher allows the deposit of the published version in PDF format, such version should be deposited into the NSFC repository and open access should be provided immediately."

However, as Prof. Yonghe Zheng points out, the NSFC repository may not go live until 2016.

When I sought clarification on this issue (above) Prof. Zheng replied, "In the meantime, we encourage them to deposit their papers in their respective institutional repositories."

This leads me to assume that until the repository goes live the NSFC policy is one of encouragement rather than necessity.

June 19, 2014 4:04 pm 

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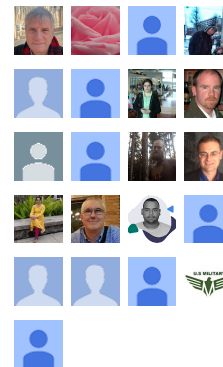
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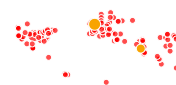
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